

from Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska, where they had been waiting for the weather at Shemya to clear. Blizzard conditions and extreme crosswinds were ravaging the small exposed island. This weather was not uncommon, just another day at the office for 55th Wing aircrew. However, after receiving clearance to land, weather conditions deteriorated rapidly.

□ 1045

Firsthand accounts from crewmembers onboard describe the violent buffeting they experienced on descent as like being on the end of a yo-yo. The belly of the aircraft struck the edge of a cliff on the approach end of the runway, shearing off the landing gear. As the damaged aircraft slammed into the runway, engines three and four exploded and the fuselage broke in half. Flames engulfed the crew compartment as the disintegrating aircraft slid 2,000 feet, eventually careening off the runway and down a hill.

The scene was chaotic as crewmembers worked to free themselves and their teammates from the burning wreckage while the blizzard raged. Miraculously, 18 crewmembers escaped from the flames that day. Their bodies burned and broken, they worked feverishly to extract their fellow airmen from the fiery wreckage.

In the end, six men died on that lonely airfield that day. Their names were:

Major William Bennett,
Captain Larry Mayfield,
First Lieutenant Loren Ginter,
Master Sergeant Stephen Kish,
Staff Sergeant Steven Balcer, and
Staff Sergeant Harry Parsons, III.

We honor their service and their sacrifice and commend their spirit to the Creator. We pray for their families and loved ones who cherish their memory. We also honor the survivors of this tragic crash who will forever bear the scars of their service and the memory of that day. May we never forget what they gave to the cause of freedom, and that it was the dedication of warriors like these that won the Cold War. And may we pledge to honor their sacrifice by recommitting ourselves to eternal vigilance in the defense of freedom.

PROTECTING QUALITY OF LIFE OF VETERANS IS A TOP PRIORITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Virginia (Mrs. LURIA) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. LURIA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2368, the COVENANT Act, legislation to ensure our Nation's veterans can receive the benefits they deserve after being exposed to toxic substances in the course of their service.

Mr. Speaker, protecting the quality of life of our veterans is a top priority of this Congress, and particularly for my colleagues on the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, where I chair the Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs Subcommittee.

One such veteran I have the privilege of representing, Master Sergeant Brian Graves of Virginia Beach, flew missions over the Middle East for the United States Air Force. Today, he lives with breathing problems after inhaling jet fumes and being exposed to other toxins during his time of service.

The COVENANT Act will dramatically streamline the VA benefits process for thousands of veterans like Master Sergeant Graves.

Between June 2007 and February 2021, we know that 13,900 veterans filed a disability benefit claim related to toxic exposure. Mr. Speaker, of those nearly 14,000 veterans, only 4,000 claims were granted. That is simply unacceptable. We cannot allow history to repeat itself. Veterans like myself watched our peers who served in Vietnam wait decades for the benefits they deserve.

The recent veterans who served in the Middle East, southwest Asia, east Africa, and the Philippines need our help today. Mr. Speaker, they are hurting and, in some cases, dying. Congress must not neglect them in their time of need.

That is why I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting the COVENANT Act, a comprehensive approach to securing benefits for veterans exposed to toxic substances overseas.

HONORING THE SERVICE OF CORPUS CHRISTI POLICE CHIEF MIKE MARKLE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CLOUD) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CLOUD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Corpus Christi, Texas Police Chief Mike Markle on his career of public service, and to congratulate him on his upcoming retirement.

From his service in the United States Navy as a hospital corpsman to his 31-year career service at the Corpus Christi Police Department, Chief Markle has consistently placed the needs of others before himself. Enlisting in the police academy in 1989, he protected the streets for many years with courage and determination. He has served as a field training officer, on the Honor Guard, and on the SWAT team.

Corpus Christi turned to him to lead during the Police Department's transition in 2015. As head of the Corpus Christi PD, he pursued excellence in leadership and a commitment to learning. His priority was to improve community outreach and address the modern challenges of policing.

His legacy of helping others stretches beyond his police work, as he currently serves on the board of directors for the Wesley Community Center. There is no question that Chief Markle left a lasting impact on the Coastal Bend region, and he will be sorely missed.

I thank him for his commitment to protecting the citizens of Corpus Christi, and I wish him well in his future endeavors.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 50 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at noon.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Margaret Grun Kibben, offered the following prayer:

Gracious God, we earnestly pray today to walk in Your presence. With You beside us, may Your nearness both inspire and compel us to take steps in response to Your divine mercy, in obedience to Your divine guidance, and in gratitude for Your divine compassion for us.

May each thought that comes to our minds be of Your will.

May each aspiration our souls conjure be worthy of Your blessing.

May every action we take reveal Your love to those who need it so desperately.

May every word we speak give honor to You.

It is our humble prayer that in everything we do today, we would be instruments of Your transcendent love in this place, of Your sacrificial love for all of creation, and of Your redeeming love for this world and for each of Your children.

We offer ourselves to You in the hope of Your mercy and in the strength of Your name.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to section 11(a) of House Resolution 188, the Journal of the last day's proceedings is approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. FEENSTRA) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. FEENSTRA led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

**CERTIFICATE OF ELECTION FOR
THE HONORABLE JULIA LETLOW
FROM THE STATE OF LOUISIANA**

STATE OF LOUISIANA
Executive Department
CERTIFICATE OF ELECTION

To the Clerk of the United States House of Representatives:

I, John Bel Edwards, Governor of the State of Louisiana, do hereby certify that, in accordance with the provisions of the Louisiana Election Code, on the 20th day of March, 2021, Julia Letlow was elected by the qualified electors of the Fifth Congressional District of the State of Louisiana as a Member of the United States House of Representatives to represent the State of Louisiana in the 117th Congress for the unexpired, remaining term of office. The votes cast, 67,203 for Julia Letlow; 28,255 for Sandra "Candy" Christophe; 5,497 for Chad Conerly; 929 for Robert Lansden; 464 for Allen Guillory; 402 for "Jim" Davis; 334 for Sancha Smith; 236 for M.V. "Vinny" Mendoza; 131 for Jaycee Magnuson; 67 for Richard H. Pannell; 62 for Horace Melton III; and 36 for Errol Victor, Sr., are on file and of record in the Office of the Secretary of State of Louisiana.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have set my hand officially and caused to be affixed the Great Seal of Louisiana in the City of Baton Rouge on this 31st day of March, 2021.

JOHN BEL EDWARDS,
Governor of Louisiana.

Attest by the Secretary of State
KYLE ARDOIN,
Secretary of State.

[State Seal Affixed]

**SWEARING IN OF THE HONORABLE
JULIA LETLOW, OF LOUISIANA,
AS A MEMBER OF THE HOUSE**

The SPEAKER. Will the Representative-elect and the members of the Louisiana delegation present themselves in the well.

All Members will rise and the Representative-elect will please raise her right hand.

Ms. LETLOW appeared at the bar of the House and took the oath of office, as follows:

Do you solemnly swear that you will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that you will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that you take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that you will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which you are about to enter, so help you God.

The SPEAKER. Congratulations, you are now a Member of the 117th Congress.

**WELCOMING THE HONORABLE
JULIA LETLOW TO THE HOUSE
OF REPRESENTATIVES**

The SPEAKER. Without objection, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. SCALISE) is recognized for 1 minute.

There was no objection.

Mr. SCALISE. Madam Speaker, it is with great honor that on behalf of the entire Louisiana delegation and on behalf of all of my colleagues, we welcome JULIA LETLOW to Congress.

It has been quite a journey, and it is not a journey that she walks alone. This has been JULIA and Luke LETLOW's journey for over a year, and we all still grieve for the loss of Luke, who tragically died just days before he would have been sworn into Congress. But JULIA never backed down, never looked back. She moved forward, and she said we are going to continue this journey with her beautiful family.

Madam Speaker, up in the balcony, we have her 3-year-old son, Jeremiah, and her 1-year-old daughter, Jacqueline. We welcome them, as well as both JULIA's and Luke's families, who are in the balcony.

There are so many great attributes that JULIA is going to bring to this Congress. She graduated from the University of Louisiana Monroe. She has been in higher education her entire life and truly dedicated her life to serving others. She will be serving on the Education and Labor Committee, as well as on the Agriculture Committee, two important committees that enrich this country, as well as her district.

She has a great record of service. We are so excited to have her in our delegation. We are especially proud that JULIA becomes, today, the first Republican woman ever elected to Congress from Louisiana.

Madam Speaker, let me welcome our newest Member of Congress, JULIA LETLOW.

Ms. LETLOW. Madam Speaker, it is an honor and a privilege to stand here today as the first Republican woman elected to Congress from Louisiana.

Representing the people of the Fifth Congressional District is a great responsibility, and I pledge to work hard for you in Congress.

My district is blessed with some of the best resources in the Nation, and no one knew that better than my husband, Luke, who was elected to this very seat but who we lost to COVID just days before he was set to take office.

Luke and I were a team with a goal to better our State and our country. I want to thank him for paving the way for me. I am here today to carry that torch forward, to be a voice for our farmers, to champion education, to help bring broadband to our rural communities, and to ensure our economy is thriving again.

The last year has not been easy for our country. Too many families, like mine, have experienced tragedy because of this pandemic. To those families, I see you, I hear you, and most importantly, I pray with you.

I want to thank my family, both the Letlows and the Barnhills, for being the rock-solid, godly people you are in my life.

I also cannot thank my staff, the Louisiana delegation, and my congressional colleagues enough for guiding me and welcoming me so fully. And I thank everyone who has reached out and prayed for my family these past few months.

Today, as I start my journey in Congress, I choose hope. I want to be part of a revival of honesty, integrity, and hard work within these hallowed Halls. I will stand up for what is right and true, bringing hope of a better tomorrow for my children and for yours.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. Under clause 5(d) of rule XX, the Chair announces to the House that, in light of the administration of the oath to the gentlewoman from Louisiana, the whole number of the House is 430.

**ELECTING A CERTAIN MEMBER TO
A CERTAIN STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

Mr. AGUILAR. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Democratic Caucus, I offer a privileged resolution and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 310

Resolved, That the following named Member be, and is hereby, elected to the following standing committee of the House of Representatives:

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM: Mr. Quigley.

Mr. AGUILAR (during the reading). Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be considered as read and printed in the RECORD.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CUELLAR). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

**ELECTING A MEMBER TO CERTAIN
STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

Mr. MCCARTHY. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Republican Conference, I offer a privileged resolution and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 311

Resolved, That the following named Member be, and is hereby, elected to the following standing committees of the House of Representatives:

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR: Ms. Letlow

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE: Ms. Letlow

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

**ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER
PRO TEMPORE**

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will entertain up to 15 requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.